

Delegation from Needham Congregational Church to Santa María Tzejá

July 29 -August 9, 2009

Caryl Johnson and Alan Clayton-Matthews with delegate Clark Taylor

Our interpreters were Paula Worby and Ana Perez. Paula’s husband Luis Solano and daughter Sonya also joined us for the trip along with Marcelo, Ana’s son.

Note: The name of the contributor is noted.

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Introduction

This year's August delegation to Santa Maria Tzeja was notable because we were small in size as we left Needham that July morning to head to the airport. As we traveled I noticed that small delegations have positives and negatives. While in the village we all ate meals together which allows for the ease of set up and also more time to spend as a group. The disadvantage was that we all had this common meal together which meant no stories to share during our evening gatherings about delegates eating with different families. Since we were a small group walking and travel made less worry about staying together. Of course there were less of us to attend meetings in Santa Maria Tzeja but the village members seemed to adjust rapidly to our numbers.

On the bus ride to Coban we were joined by the two interpreters and their families. Paula Worby, one of our interpreters and her husband Luis Solano and their daughter Sonya, an 11 year old and fluent Spanish speaker. They have traveled with us several other times and they are a pleasure to have with our group. We were also honored to have Ana Perez, our other interpreter and her son Marcelo who is bi-lingual. Paula and Ana are expert interpreters but also have an understanding of the cultural slights of rural Guatemala. Marcelo had a blast teaching English at the schools. He also enjoyed teaching and playing chess at one of the local stores. Sonya was her usual jovial self helping with English classes, completing the village schedule for the group, and also her welcome warm smiles. Since we didn't have Needham youth we welcomed Sonya and Marcelo as our own inviting them to all functions and they even sang at the farewell party with us. Having the two interpreters and their families made our ranks swell to eight delegates. We appreciated their contributions and support in all we did.

At the meetings in the city we had a chance to meet the accompaniers who are working for NISGUA in Santa Maria Tzeja. They are Ruby, who left for the United States due to a severe illness, Channel who will continue to work through the fall, and Ashley, who starts this month in her support for the village. These three women made a special effort to attend a meeting in the city so we could say hello and chat with them. It was delightful to spend time with these courageous people. It is with much elation that we also had time in the city to reacquaint ourselves with a fellow Needham resident Amanda. Amanda has been working in Guatemala for over a year and she is extremely knowledgeable about the country and its people. Channel and Amanda joined us for lunch and a lively conversation.

Upon returning from the village to Guatemala City we spent a few hours with Edwin, Ali, Chely, and their newest family member, Kalaya. The family's pleasure in being together is evident and oozes from the walls of their apartment. Clark, Edwin, and Alan caught up on legal situations in the country. Ali held Kalaya and talked with Caryl and Chely who were in and out of the room playing with Chely's toys.

Needham Send-Off and Travel to Guatemala

The send off was held at the Taylor's residence. The crowd was expected to be small since there were only three of us heading to Guatemala. Thanks to the wonderful support of all those that attended we had a large group that enjoyed snacks and drinks provided by many partnership people. The room was full of laughter and chatter as people arrived for the gathering. The huge level of support for the three travelers was felt through out the house as we settled down to share our thoughts and good will for the people in Santa Maria Tzeja, the folks here in Needham, and the three travelers. This evening doesn't last long, just 60 minutes but it is much appreciated for the notes of solidarity celebrated.

Wednesday morning we gathered at the Johnson's, later than normal, at 7 am to be driven into the airport. Our flight was scheduled for later that morning and we needed to check in early to be assigned seats on the flight to Dallas. The flights to Dallas and then to Guatemala City went smoothly. A short delay of 60 minutes kept us on the ground in Dallas but we still arrived in Guatemala at 8:15 PM. The airport was quiet and the taxi areas less hurried which was welcome. The one difficulty was the bank exchange areas were closed which meant the money exchange had to wait until Thursday morning. We found a station wagon taxi for the three of us and our huge amount of luggage and were driven to the Hotel Spring. Since Guatemala is two hours ahead of Needham it was 10:15 PM by our body clocks. That is a long day and the beds were a welcome sight.



City Scene at Presidential Palace

Coyuntura (Briefing) with Luis Solano (Clark Taylor)

Thursday morning we were very fortunate to have Luis Solano as the one who would report on the current situation in Guatemala for us and interpreted by Paula Worby. Luis began by saying that a year ago he had described the government as Social-Democratic (providing social services to the population—i.e., liberal on social issues). He told us that the government has continued along that line, at least in its intentions. At the same time President Alvaro Colom's government is beholden to the business interests that financed its political campaign. They include both legal and illegal business sectors.

On the social services provision the ruling party that Colom heads has two purposes: first, to provide for basic needs like education, health and hunger prevention; and second, to be seen as providing for the population as an enhancement of the party's appeal in the next election. So the government focuses on services to the lowest income sections of the country, which also happen to be the critical areas its vote comes from. The Ixcán (the region where Santa María Tzejá is located) is important to both purposes.

In January of 2008, shortly after Colom was elected, the government presented its social services plan, called the Social Cohesion Program (SCP), in the Ixcán. The SCP is headed by Sandra Torres, the wife of President Colom. Ms. Torres comes from a progressive (leftist) background, but more recently has worked as an administrator in the maquila industry (the garment-finishing industry which provides cheap labor to clothing manufacturers, which is known for exploiting workers). Another factor about her is that she comes from a humble background, which is hard for the elites to swallow, who figure "first ladies" should come from the same social sector as they belong. In the President's UNE political party, she's a power "behind the throne," and is expected to be the party's next presidential candidate when her husband has finished his term. She gets a lot of press coverage in the countryside where she is seen as delivering popular services.

To pull off big social programs she, along with the government she serves, need money. This time of world financial crisis makes that difficult to come by, coupled with the fact that elites withhold their tax money, seeing her activities with the SCP as giving her a political advantage. So much of the elite's attack is personalized against Sandra Torres. As a consequence the social programs can't reach everyone, giving it limited success. Given these realities there is intense confrontation in the Congress between the government and the opposition.

The government came to power with both holy and unholy alliances. On the unholy side, government contracts go to businesses that provided big support to the UNE party in its election campaign. One critical contract to win is to become the business in charge of issuing drivers licenses, passports, and personal ID documents—all containing detailed personal data. This service has been privatized—i.e., authorized by the past government and provided by private-sector businesses. Control over sensitive personal information makes for a very lucrative business in itself, but is enhanced by the fact that there is market for this information. Such information makes it possible for politicians who get it to manipulate the vote, which can include blackmailing rivals. It is also sold under the table to the U.S. for immigration control purposes. A big illegal business in providing false travel documents also provides major revenue. So the stakes in getting the contract are very high.

There is also a legal market in this personal data. Private businesses can buy access to it to determine credit risks, etc. They pay a subscription price by the month to get this access. The legal dimension lies in the fact that individuals can sign a release for their data to provide needed information to banks and other legal businesses.

Luis then linked the inevitable competition for this personal data business contract to a famous recent case in which a well-known lawyer named Rodrigo Rosenberg, was assassinated. Before his death he was videoed saying that if he was killed it would be the work of President Colom or his wife. When that video came to light, it put intense pressure on Colom to resign, or at least step aside until the matter was investigated and resolved. Luis explored various hypotheses of what has been revealed to be an extremely complex case that had the potential to become a coup d'état of the Guatemalan state. Rosenberg, it turns out, was the lawyer who was helping three major businesses set up phony "front" companies to compete for the personal data contract. In this scheme the three main competitors (all directly or indirectly connected to organized crime) would not seem to be in open competition with each other.

With just this much information it is clear that Rosenberg was not some disinterested bystander or neutrally involved lawyer. Hypotheses about the case range from the posing that what Rosenberg said in the video was true, to the possibility that this was a right-wing plot to destabilize the government. Certainly, in the weeks following the release of the video there were serious efforts to destabilize the government. But Colom was able to mobilize his followers and turn aside the pressure, at least for a time.

The case has now been referred to an United Nations-sponsored Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala. That body has an enormous challenge before it, to uncover the truth about the "hidden power" (organized crime) behind the government and to propose laws that, if passed, would lead to a needed transformation in the Guatemalan government. Its report, expected this fall, will set in motion an intense struggle over the way the country is governed. A drama will play out that will involved the country's social movements, Colom's administration and the hidden organized crime sector that has infiltrated the government at all levels. A potential danger is that the wealthy powerful will reactivate "sleeping" cells of repression, that is, death squads. So the more successful the movement for reform gets, the greater the danger lying in wait for those involved with it.

We left that session sobered by the situation in the country, but greatly enlightened by Luis' insightful and well-organized presentation.

Presentation by Mario Domingo, Coordinator of the Office for the Defense of Human Dignity, a part of the Archdiocesan Office of Human Rights (ODHAG)(Clark Taylor)

Mr. Domingo updated us on the case that involved the murder of Bishop Juan Gerardi on April 29, 1998. Just two days before that, Bishop Gerardi, in his role as chair of the Catholic Church's "Truth Commission," had issued its report about the causes and conduct of the country's civil war. It pointed out that the army had been responsible for the vast majority of human rights violations and named names of its perpetrators. Mario reported that the first sentencing in the case had taken place on June 7, 2001.

He began by saying that what produced the murder was the logic of the country's civil war, which concluded in December of 1996. At the end of the war two institutions were standing strong, while all else was weak: the church and the army. The church had been hit hard in the war, including the fact that so many had been killed in the Diocese of Quiché (where SMT is located) that the diocese had been closed down. Even with all that, however, the church remained as a strong force.

With the killing of Bishop Gerardi, however, the military challenged the church. This was in response to the fact that the church had rejected the provision that created the civil war Peace Accord, which said that any Truth Commission set up to investigate the human rights violations committed during the civil war could not name names of perpetrators. With that Bishop Gerardi decided to do something that would strengthen the eventual formation of a Truth Commission by providing it with names. He followed through and supervised an exhaustive interviewing of people victimized by the killings and human rights violations of the war, along with the writing of an extensive five-volume report.

The army was, of course, angry with the report, but wouldn't own up to its participation in a crime of this importance. Its agents threw out a smokescreen of plot lines, alleging that Gerardi took a woman, that he was gay and was with a gay lover, that he and his associate were gay lovers, that his dog did it, or that a youth gang did it. There were twelve alleged plots in all, and the investigators, including Mario Domingo, had to track all of them down.

So why did the army kill the bishop? In El Salvador the agreement in the peace accord said that a Truth Commission could reveal facts, but not name names. Nonetheless the commission went beyond its charge and did name names, which was followed by a blanket amnesty for perpetrators. The fear was that such a thing could happen in Guatemala, as well. Guatemala, however, already had a Law of Reconciliation that provided that any crime committed in the scene of combat couldn't be prosecuted and any crime committed that wasn't in battle *could* be prosecuted. However, it was one thing to say that such crimes could be prosecuted; it was another thing entirely to investigate and actually prosecute.

The army said we can't allow that, and by then the army had taken over all government structures. Furthermore, it had moved from being an army supporting the interests of the rich to having its own interests, including wide-ranging and illegal business interests. Mario said that an army that isn't involved with defending the country, but rather is about defending its own interests, is a very dangerous institution. And now the Gerardi report, called "Recovering Historical Memory" was about to be published. The message from the army was that you aren't going to go anywhere with that report—and they killed him.

After the initial sentencing of military men involved in the assassination, the investigation continued. It has brought to light who the officers were that were behind the killing. He named three in particular in their ranks up the line in the hierarchy. The investigation still lacks evidence regarding the man at the top, while the man in the middle rank was himself killed, and there is evidence against the third one. The goal is to get sufficient evidence to indict the man at the top.

We then had a chance for questions, one of which was about his feelings in the face of threats he has faced. He said he feels OK now, but he has had intimidations and threats in the past—and said that is normal in his line of work. He said, “You just can’t let the criminals get the upper hand.”

Another was about CICIG, the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala. He said they know who the killers are, but they need to present overwhelming evidence of guilt before going to prosecution and they don’t have enough evidence for that yet. They are dealing with what they call a “culture of impunity” in which crime has no consequence. Police are themselves part of the crime problem and can’t be trusted. But CICIG is beginning to crack the system in small ways. He concluded by saying that sometimes we get so focused on the consequences that we don’t get at the underlying causes of the current situation. For that you have to go to the fundamental rights, which include economic and political rights.

We were inspired to be in the presence, and get the thinking of, such a courageous, effective person. As we were about to leave he told us that Francisco Goldman, author of the book all of us had read, The Art of Political Murder, was in the very building where we were and offered to try to put us in touch with him, but Goldman had already gone into another meeting. This now-famous author was in Guatemala to speak and celebrate the fact that his book had just been published in Spanish.

CONIC Via Campesina (Alan Clayton-Matthews)

CONIC stands for the National Indigenous and Campesino Coordinator, or Coordinadora Nacional Indigena y Campesina in Spanish.

Our two hosts were leaders in the National Women's Leadership Assembly of the organization. Juventina López is Maya Mam, and Luisa Xinico is Maya Kakchikel. Later they were joined by Juan, the husband of a friend of Ana's. CONIC is affiliated with the umbrella organization Via Campesino. They work to rescue the Mayan culture and the struggle for land and territory – It’s the struggle for life and peace.

CONIC had just had their 11th national assembly, and their 17th anniversary as an organization, with representatives from 16 departments (states) and 600 communities.

They gave an encyclopedic overview of their organization and described many of the challenges and struggles their people faced, especially related to land rights. It was sobering to hear of the problems with the government’s land reforms. The land offered by the government is often of poor quality, and is mortgaged by the new indigenous owners. There were promises of government support to develop the land, but often the support does not come as promised. The result is that the government has displaced people from the land, often by force with violent means.

It was also sobering to hear of the same development travesties that we have heard of from Luis Solano, AESMAC, Madre Selva, and other groups that we have visited. These include ignoring the results of popular consultations, displacement of villages for hydroelectric development, deforestation, the destruction of mountains for mining, and the poisoning of the water. To the Mayan people, nature and mother earth have rights and are held sacred, so the wasting of the land is devastating to their life and pursuit of happiness.

Nevertheless, CONIC has had much success in their land reform efforts, and they continue to push for legislation to guarantee rights for the indigenous.



Meeting with AESMAC and University Students (Clark Taylor)

Attendance:

Eduardo Juarez (studying agronomy and natural resources)

César Canil (Law)

Santiago Botón (Communications/journalism)

Rogelio Hernandez (zoology)

Juan Tomás Pérez (agronomy graduate)

Dorotea Gómez (anthropologist, a friend of Pula Worby)

Alan, Caryl and Clark, Amanda Kistler, Paula Worby, Luis Solano, Sonya Worby-Solano, Ana Pérez, Marcelino Pérez.

A member of the AESMAC directorate, Eduardo Juarez, welcomed us to the meeting. Alan C-M from our group asked what they would like to discuss. When no one brought up a theme he asked about where they are with developing an AESMAC strategic plan.

César named the members of the committee, beginning with himself, Ana López, Edwin Canil, Santiago Botón, Rogelio Hernandez—the five of them. César noted that they aren't very far along. They meet on weekends, and so far have done an analysis of strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats.

Santiago observed that the AESMAC statutes position the organization with an incredibly ambitious agenda. They are committed in the statutes to work on human rights, on the International Labor Organizations provision that indigenous peoples must be consulted on major developments in their territories, etc. He pointed out that AESMAC is based on three principles, all of which have contradictory aspects. First is that the group is non-religious/sectarian, but religion, as he sees it, is the basis for morality; second, the group is non-partisan politically, but political parties are able to make things happen; and it is not-for-profit, which limits its ability to gather resources from some sources. He then argued that they need to develop a comprehensive strategic plan, and not be satisfied with little projects. He sees Guatemala as ripe for profound change, but that indigenous groups are divided, which is a major problem. They need to pull their strengths together.

Juan thinks AESMAC has a huge potential, but that it needs a strong plan. As students they had a lot of energy and ideas, but now they are involved in the families they have formed and in making a living. We have to change that, he argued. University graduates need to get experience, perhaps in the city and then bring it to the Ixcán in order to create jobs. With all the tensions around that we need to maintain our values. Organizations in the indigenous community get undermined where money is involved. Key groups have their own forms of corruption and lose their way. He went on to talk about the graduates paying back money to the scholarship fund for future SMT students. He thinks that 5% is about right, though some have proposed more. We need to keep things in balance, he said.

Eduardo said that AESMAC had been a strong force for them as students, but—agreeing with Juan— noted that was when we had more time. Now when we are workers we have less time, so we need the strategic plan to guide us. A key question is how to generate more jobs in the Ixcán?

Responding to Santiago's comment, César argued that if AESMAC was going to be legalized by the state (which allows them to raise money), the writers of the statutes, including himself, had to state that the organization was non-religious, not politically partisan and not-for-profit. If they hadn't put that in, they wouldn't have been approved. So, he observed, we can't be party-based as a group, but its members as individuals can be involved with politically parties.

Santiago acknowledged that César was right, but went on to say that we need to break the colonized mentality. For that we need new ideas to enrich the process. Our ideas grow and change.

Alan noted from his perspective that it is important to keep the wider context, including trade treaties and the like in mind. But the key question is, who do they benefit? He pointed to the transnational corporations as the beneficiaries. He hoped the strategic plan would include decisions being made by local people in the region. He said that their plan doesn't have to be "realistic" in the present context, but people should recognize from it that there are alternatives. So while the plan can't be political in its statements, it should lead to political power.

I (Clark) asked if the AESMAC strategy was still oriented to building power, first at the local level, then move on to the region and nation. Santiago said I was right in that. As it is, he said, we have people governing who don't know the local level. César called attention to the issue that when we say we will start locally, we run into the fact that we need to get experience elsewhere and bring it back to the local situation.

Juan stated that we have to look at this as an experiment. We are an experiment. If we get experience and come back to SMT, we can start things that will make it possible for the next generation to get experience right in the village. Santiago reported from his travels in the Ixcán region that people in other

communities challenge SMT to put candidates forward for political offices in the Ixcán. He noted that Emiliano had been proposed as a candidate in the previous election, which the progressive candidate lost. In his opinion, if Emiliano had won, things in the Ixcán would be different in a positive way now.

Santiago then pointed out that he had been invited to participate in a process of analysis with the Catholic progressive organization PRODESSA, the group that is responsible for bilingual education in the village. Santiago wondered aloud if bilingual education is really liberating, or is it another form of colonization, and to be told that this is the way? In his view it is OK, but we have to ensure that the dominant group really learns and respects our language. He went on to say that the indigenous have to integrate their forces.

Juan argued in favor of bilingual education as a way of building positive self-esteem. He noted that some of us feel inferior when we are speaking in public places. Sometimes we discriminate against ourselves, look down on ourselves. Santiago added that we need a combination of formal education and work in social movements. Both are important.

Rogelio suggested that whether it is through AESMAC or not, we are working to better our society. If we compare our community to others, we are in a very different place. We already have some AESMAC members who are working locally, including Benjamin, Emiliano, Juvencio. All are giving their all, 100%, so that although we lack a concrete plan, we are achieving overall goals.

Santiago went back to his problem with the statutes. There are such limits there, he observed. I don't believe we should always follow the rules, the laws. He concluded that he feels really hopeful about what they are doing, really excited about it. He wished we had more time for the kind of discussion going on with the delegation. He feels he learns a lot in them. His closing thought: even the simple act of forming an organization focused on social change and keeping it going for eleven years is a great success. And we've done it without outside donations, with our own means. That's great stuff.

At the end of the meeting we thanked the students for coming and sent them on their way with money to pay the taxi fare for their way to their homes.

Trip to Coban and Meeting with High School Students (Caryl Johnson)

The delegation members had decided to travel to Coban which is north of Guatemala city, via the local transportation bus. This air-condition Greyhound type bus has luggage areas under the seating for our huge amount of luggage. The interpreters, Paula and Ana, and their families joined us at the bus station located 6 blocks from the hotel. The country side of Guatemala is diverse and interesting to watch. Some of the group enjoyed the movie shown on the bus, while others read, wrote or watched the landscape. As always the bus stops mid-way at a restaurant for a "10 minute" break. It is a skill to use the bathroom, then obtain food, and finally eat before the driver is honking the bus horn warning us to climb aboard before the bus departs. The bus winds its way through the rest of the semi-arid area of the country and starts to climb the last hills into the cloud rainforest. The light rain or chepe, chepe as the natives call it misted the lush rainforest just outside of the city Coban. This year as we pulled into the bus station the bus actually had a bay area under the station roof to park. This meant we were not parked on a major road avoiding other vehicles driving by the bus. The ease of unloading the luggage in this area was noticed as we gathered the luggage brought by all parties. Luis was quick to find two taxis as some of the travelers wanted to walk and others went to the Monja Blanca pension with the luggage. We have decided on past

delegations to travel with at least two people per taxi. This worked well this time with some walkers and some riders.

We settled into the pension and Marcelo and Sonya took to the hammock right a way enjoying the relaxing motion of swinging back and forth. We had several hours free time before our meeting time with the high school students. Members of the delegation used their free time differently. Some people chose to nap, others went in search of internet cafes, and the last group decided to try a new restaurant for coffee and a light snack. This place just one block from the pension prides itself in serving Coban coffees, chocolates, and organically grown local products. The name has been forgotten but looking right as you exit the Monja Blanca you can see the sign one block down the street.

The group rejoined at the pension at 4:30 to wait the students. We decided to play a rousing card game called spoons. We didn't have spoons so initially we used our tongues and then changed to colored pencils. After several hours as it was beginning to get dark we thought the high school students were not going to come and join us. We headed out to the restaurant sad that we would be eating alone.

After arriving in Santa Maria Tzeja Pedro Chom told us that the students were indeed waiting for us on Friday evening but they were at a different hotel. They had gathered at the hotel the February delegation had used for its stay in Coban. They not knowing where we were and us not knowing their location made both groups miss out on the opportunity to connect and share a meal.



Coban statue

Heart of Palm (Palmita) Processing Plant Visit at the Federation of Cooperatives (Alan Clayton-Mathews)

Our guides:
Juvencio Chom
Miguel Tojín

The Federation of Cooperatives is a joint venture of the Cooperatives of Santa María Tzejá and two other communities.

Juvencio and Miguel gave us a tour of the heart of palms processing factory facility that is finally on the verge of being ready for operation, with the arrival of the final piece of machinery expected within a week. The floor was redone to be in compliance with the required specifications. The factory manager is an engineer from Chile named Pamela, who was not there when we visited. A mechanic will also be employed at the plant. The plant will have a capacity of processing 2,000 stalks per day, and a potential capacity of 11,000 stalks per day.

The Federation has about a hectare of land devoted to the heart of palm plant, called a palmito in Spanish. (The heart-of-palm that is made from the stalk is called peje-baje.) 5,000 plants can be grown per hectare. The crop is all organic. In Primavera, one of the communities in the Federation, there are 25 hectares of hearts of palm cultivated. Each plant takes 12 to 18 months to grow, and grows about 3 meters tall. The plants produce a single tall candela covered with spines. In order to obtain a uniform size for the product, plants will be grown to the same height – so they achieve the same thickness of the candela, and will be cut in 150 cm sections. The Federation is looking at two possible markets. One is the national market, for hotels. The other is in the international “fair trade” market, especially in France, Belgium, and Spain. The product would be too expensive to sell in local markets.

In all, the Federation has 10 hectares on which they raise pigs and where they have a nursery (vivero) devoted to forestry products and fruit. The nursery has a 100,000 plant capacity. The forestry product project has financing from the Basque region, and the fruit project is receiving Guatemalan government financing. Right now the major market for the forestry products is for reforestation projects funded by the government and non profits. (1,111 plants per hectare are needed for reforestation.) However, they also sell on the private market – we saw someone picking up a couple plants on their motorcycle. They have sold 30,000 plants so far this year, at a price of Q2 per plant, and Q2.65 per mahogany plant. The nursery employs a few persons – mostly women, and some men. Right now, employment is limited to cooperative affiliates and their spouses.

Bienvenida (Welcoming party) (Caryl Johnson)

We were picked up in Coban by the cooperative van. As the van was backing up in the covered driveway area of the Monja Blanca the van hit a short post denting the rear door of the vehicle. The door wouldn't open and we had to load the luggage through the side door. There was discussion about stopping to pry out the dent and then being able to open the door. We detoured to a car repair shop and found the repair would take too long so we headed towards SMT (Santa Maria Tzeja). The driver, Encarcianion did a fabulous job negotiated the winding wet roads. Originally the plan was to take the long road that has more pavement but we learned at the last minute there was a mud slide blocking the road. We took the shorter way with more gravel roads.

As the van traveled down the last hill before the town center we were greeted at the bridge by young women from the Basico, middle school. They extended a warm welcome and said the rest of the activities were scheduled for that evening. The welcoming party held this year at the cooperative building featured the middle school students. They had a variety of entertainment planned for the community and us. The first was a skit with many students involved. There was a young man who sang and played guitar as well as a group of boys who did lip synching to two songs. One of the songs was in English and the lead singer did an admirable job making the audience think he was the original artist. The last act was of 4 young men walking on stilts. They walked, danced and jumped in unison and separately. It was very impressive. At the end of the entertainment the middle school students learning to play the marimba

picked up their mallets and started. This is one of the ways the community is teaching their youth about the Maya ways and customs.



Road in village

Improvement Committee (Alan Clayton-Matthews)

Committee members present:

Juan Ortiz Solis – President

Roberto Quino Quinilla – Secretary

Maria Chajal Larios – Treasurer

Luis Ralios – member

We traded greetings and thanks for the work we had both done: our work in supporting the projects of Santa María Tzejá through the provision of resources and through our long-term partnership; and their work in making our stay comfortable and treating us like family. They provided us with updated accounts. Their accounts were more up to date and in better order than ours.

They gave us an update on the water project. Unfortunately, the source of the water is on private land, and the owner wants to be paid an amount that may be unacceptable to Santa María Tzejá. Early in the week we had a minor catastrophe in one of the toilets, when one member of our delegation – who was in dire stress at the time, accidentally broke the sink off the wall. We offered to pay for the repair. They will be sending us a proposal for the repair/replacement.

Church Service and Partner Family Letters (Alan Clayton-Matthews)

The church building and interior reflects the contributions and efforts of the community to create a place with the traditional feel and look of Catholic churches, with additional memorials of the village's history. Outside is the memorial to the victims of the violence. Inside has been added a large bust of the founder of Santa María Tzejá, Padre Luis, which was funded by contributions from virtually all of the families in Santa María Tzejá. There is also a statue of their patron saint, and another of Mary with Jesus after he was taken down from the cross. They have the stations of the cross, and another large picture of Mary with the open-palm welcoming gesture. And, of course, they have a large crucifix hanging on the wall behind the altar. One of the projects the church construction committee is working on, and which is partially funded by funds provided through the Improvement Committee, is to build a set of benches with backs to replace the current set of backless benches.

Their choir consisted of two miked singers accompanied by electric keyboard, two electric guitars, and drums. Some of the songs have a distinctive vocal style which is quite striking.

Here was the order of service:

About 45 minutes of singing by the choir as people and families arrived.

Welcoming of our delegation.

Prayer and prayer response.

Choir.

Gospel.

Sermon.

Choir.

Second sermon, in K'iche', mixed with Spanish.

Choir.

Prayer/response.

Holy Communion.

Offering.

Announcements.

Benediction.

The sermon was difficult to hear because of the acoustics. One captivating feature of the church service is that children are allowed to get up and roam, explore, and simply act as children. The space is large and open, and the roaming children make it a relaxing place to be, if one finds it hard to concentrate on the sermon. The communion wafers were brought to the altar with a procession of catechists with incense burners. They went all 'round the church, down each aisle and side, back, and front, bestowing the incense everywhere they went. We got our own special dispensation of incense.

After the service, we distributed the partner family letters, a joyous occasion as always, with many happy faces as children, youth, adults, and elders came up to receive their envelope as their name was called. Since the usual representative from the Improvement Committee was not there to read the names, we called for a volunteer from the audience. A young man came up to read the names on each envelope, and after a few minutes, I realized that this was Frederico Maquen, whom we had met in Coban a couple years earlier when he was in high school there. He recognized several of the names of the Needhamites on the envelopes. (Each letter is in a manilla folder with both the names of the Santa María Tzejá and Needham partner families. We learned later than Frederico is now a teacher in the Middle School.



Partner Family Letters

Meeting with Elementary School Teachers and Parents' Education Committee (Caryl Johnson)

Those at the meeting were:

Emma Reyes: Director, 4th grade teacher, participates in PEM

Maria Hernandez Us: 2st grade teacher

Magdalena Us Chajal: 1th grade teacher

Marcelino Perez: 3nd grade teacher

Valentin Quinilla: 2nd grade teacher

Isabel (Chabelo) Cux Solis: 3th grade teacher, participates in PEM

Vilma Guterrez Osorio: 6th grade teacher, participates in PEM

Members of the Needham delegation

The number of students in the elementary school is 132 boys and 103 girls plus 30 kindergarteners equals 265 students. The average class size is 27 with second and third grades divided in half each into two sections. Enma started by saying the community considers us partners sharing resources to help purchase supplies for the children. She continued by asking about children that are falling behind and how to deal with this issue. She wondered if it is nutrition or learning issues. Members of the delegation said that in our community we also have children that fall behind and it can be for a variety of different reasons. The delegation finished by saying that when children fall behind in Needham the schools will place another teacher in the room for support of these children.

Clark asked; the task of elementary education is to teach the students to read, write and critical thinking. Are you succeeding? How do you compare to other school?

Enma responded; At a meeting with the directors of other schools she realized that SMT is teaching their children to be analytical. They also have divided the classes up to make smaller class sizes. All the communities have children in the middle, advanced and some slower learners. Enma concluded by saying there are no studies to qualify the information.

Chabelo added; that SMT isn't the worse or the best. PRODESSA did a study 2 years ago. They did a diagnostic of SMT looking for 75% passing students in reading, writing, and critical thinking. SMT had not reached 75% but did better than schools in urban areas in the Ixcán. The coordinator of this project will be in the village next month, September, to share the text of the results and areas that need improvement.

Alan asked; about the next steps in the PEM program.

Chabelo said; everyone in the program is doing well and passed the 5th semester courses. The 6th semester ends in November. Time is a real challenge and many nights he is up late studying. He is doing his internship at the middle school in SMT. The first phase is observation, the second week is assisting the teacher, and the final week is teaching the classes himself. Chabelo is thinking about creating a Spanish curriculum for the middle school for his final.

Maria continued; to answer the PEM question by adding that we are doing well. PEM has helped us improve our teaching methods in the classroom. It gives us a general context of the country situation in the education world. It also helps us to advise students.

Clark; wanted to know how the bi-lingual program was coming.

Enma said; all the classes have bi-lingual periods during the day. This is more intense in the lower grades. The 4, 5, and 6 grades to a lesser degree because studies say these children speak Maya at home. Therefore the emphasis is on Spanish.

Clark continued; by asking if they felt that in 5 years this would be the best bi-lingual school in country?

Chabelo said that PRODESSA came to evaluate the school. This evaluation was extremely strick so many teachers didn't want to be observed. Chabelo decided to have the observation but the results haven't been released.

Alan mentioned that the Improvement committee hadn't received the elementary schools travel expenses for this budget.

Chabelo said; something was submitted and they have a copy. He appreciates our notifying them about the lost information and will re-submit the paperwork to receive travel expenses.



Elementary School Teachers

Meeting with the Middle School Teachers (Alan Clayton-Matthews)

Those in attendance:

Hugo Canilla, Director of the Middle School.

Randall Shea, Coordinator of the Middle School.

Junicio Choc, Academic Coordinator. First year at the Middle School.

Frederico Maquen, teaches physics, math, and physical education. First year at the Middle School, doing his year of service.

Maricela Cux Solis, teaches natural sciences and home economics. First year at the Middle School, doing her year of service.

María Caal. teaches English, typing, and serving as the Middle School Secretary. Second year at the Middle School.

Hector Tiu Canil, teaches social science, art.

Nasario Ralios, teaches accounting, industrial arts, and music.

Hugo began by talking about a couple projects the school has been working on. One was developing a presentation for the Day of Indigenous Peoples, which was to take place on Sunday, August 9th. Another was that significant progress had been made in the picture project – a photo directory of students, thanks

to the help of Eddie and Audrey. We received the photo directory via by e-mail from Hugo just after we had left, and it is available for your viewing.

Then Hugo introduced the theme of our discussion at that meeting, which was about the challenges and problems that the Middle School is now facing regarding academic performance. He said that the school was in a critical period. The students have energy, but are lacking in some respects. He asked the teachers who were present to talk about their worries and problems.

Junicio talked about the low grades that students were receiving, and that students were not doing their homework. He perceived a lack of effort by students and a lack of support by parents.

Frederico also noted that students' grades had been falling. Students haven't matured yet. They are becoming adolescents and they do what their bodies tell them to. Parents don't get good advice. They don't know how to talk to their kids. It's at the ages of 12-17 when youth need the most support, because once you're 20, your life becomes settled. He mentioned that since he is so young himself, it's difficult for the students to see him as an authority figure.

Hector said that, being indigenous, we have been suppressed and told we can't change society. Students don't go deeply. They are not analytical, and can only repeat facts. He added that in poor countries, people find it hard to speak out, so he is trying to get students to find their voice. (Hector graduated from the Santiago Indigenous Institute, a progressive school that encourages their graduates to go back to their communities to empower them and promote change.)

Maricela said that grades were good in the first semester, but that in the second semester many students did poorly. She wondered why they weren't doing better when they had the library and Internet.

Hugo then talked about the staffing problem that the Middle School faces and how that contributes to the problems the teachers had talked about. He said that we don't have a teaching staff that is consistent from year to year, so the same problems get repeated. For example, Hector, by June or July, has gained experience and understanding that would have helped him next year, except that next year he will not be with us. So the next year, we'll have a whole new staff, but when October comes, we'll lose them. Even with the scholarship support of the Needham and other countries, graduates get jobs in Playa, which is far enough away that they are not engaged in the Middle School. When people get a High School education, few stay and teach. The base for Middle School faculty has been the Elementary School, but since these teachers are pursuing their education (in the PEM program), they are not available to support the Middle School. These problems are ironic since teachers here get paid more than in other places, and we have resources, specifically the library and Internet. Also, parents here pay less for schooling than in other places, so they are not overloaded with costs. When students have not been able to attend, we gave them full scholarships. At first, they do well, but then they don't, and don't have the support of their parents. Nineteen students have dropped out. Their parents can pay, but they are disengaged. Their parents say that they don't want to study. They want to work, to go to the city (Guatemala City). If the parents have that attitude, what can we do? (Clark said that maybe we need a school for the parents.) Parents want their kids to go to school, so they don't have to work on the parcela for a living like themselves. But many parents are illiterate, and so can't track their children's homework.

We then discussed some of these issues. In response to a question about the role of the media on students, Hugo opined that the media has both a positive and a negative role.

Caryl noted that the ability for students to develop critical thinking skills needs to be started when they are young.

Clark asked about the students who are doing well, and the ratio of those who are doing well to those who are not. He also asked if there were any “stars”. Hugo responded that no, there were almost not any stars. He said that students could be divided into three groups:

1. Those who are not engaged;
2. A middle group;
3. Those who are engaged and participating.

Those students who have good grades are working hard and doing well in school, so they are elected to community leadership roles, which then has a negative impact on their grades. And some students do well in some subjects but not in others.

In response to a question about the completion of the PEM program having a positive impact on the Middle School, Hugo was hopeful that when the elementary teachers finished that program, that they would be able to come and support the Middle School. (The PEM program is a university program that certifies teachers to teach at the Middle School level. Several Elementary School teachers are now in their last year of that program.)

There was also discussion about some positive developments as well. One was a youth enterprise program – synonymous with Junior Achievement here – that Hugo and Audrey were leading. One project that the students are working on was to restore the creek that runs through the center of town. Another involved growing pineapples and selling them for a collective benefit. The parents especially liked this initiative. They also have won support from a foundation to help develop productive ideas and seek fund raising.

Also, there is the Alianza Maya, a network of several schools to build capacity and empowerment. This alliance offers training sessions for teachers. Again, however, one of the problems is that Middle School teachers who receive the training are then gone the next year. Nevertheless, the training received is useful because it will be used elsewhere.

Finally, one new project is the development of a curriculum guide for bilingual classes. Once it is written, they will send one or two teachers to be trained. But then will they stay?



Middle School Meeting

Meeting with AESMAC in SMT (Caryl Johnson)

Those in attendance:

Hugo Quinilla

Estela Garcia Hernandez – board member

Mario de la Cruz Hernandez – sports activities

Silvano Canil – member at large

Romaldo Panjoj Quino – He is an agronomy engineer doing his internship with the National Park Service. For this organization he is in charge of internal affairs.

Aurelio Canil Boton – President since April 2008 and his term is finished in 2010.

Nazario Gutteriez

Members of the Needham delegation

Brief history of AESMAC, the student and professional' association - The idea came up in 1998 when students were returning from a range of different high schools. The notion was to exchange information about the different schools and they decided to form an association. The first assembly of the association was in 1999. In 2003 they were working to legalize AESMAC, but there were technical problems, so they finally accomplished the legal process in 2005. The main objective is to contribute to the well-being of the community.

The members of AESMAC gave us an idea of what is currently happening inside the organization. They have 65 affiliates with 35 of them being male. There are 63 high school graduates, 2 in high school, and one about to attend high school. Of the total 65 members 40 are at the university and 4 have graduated. Finally there are 21 high school graduates that didn't attend the university.

Of the 61 students currently studying at the university 42 belong to AESMAC and they are studying 15 different majors. The members are actively trying to recruit current high school students to join the organization. Some of the university students were apart of AESMAC before it was incorporated. These members didn't reinstate their membership. AESMAC continues to grow with four new members joining in March 2009.

There are two agreements when you join the organization; to pay back a percentage of the scholarship and to complete a year of service to the community. They have 8 people repaying their scholarships and have collected 15,650Q through December 2008. There are a few graduates that are not paying into the fund. The group still felt there was enough money to start a scholarship. The selection process for a scholarship student is somewhat different than that of the Scholarship Committee (CHE). CHE has three requirements with the following weights: 1) academic (80%); 2) discipline, that is, the field of study (10%); and 3) parents' contribution to the community (10%). AESMAC does not include the parents' contribution. They also take account of the socio-economic position of the family, and who was denied by CHE. The total amount is 10,500Q which pays 80% of the total costs. AESMAC members with jobs besides contributing to the scholarship fund are also contributing to a health fund for the community. This fund is open to anyone and so far they have helped 5 women.

When AESMAC or the community needs work done or proposals written they hire from within the organization to complete the task. For instance a grant was needed for University scholarships. An AESMAC member was paid 2000Q to do this work. Another project was to research and start writing a History of SMT. A person with in AESMAC, Santiago Boton, was paid 10,000Q to start this project and

write the preliminary draft. They need another 5000Q to complete the project. Students at the school are using this book /draft for research.

AESMAC also held information panels. The community members that went to school came to SMT to share their area of expertise. There are several books documenting the panels.

AESMAC also implemented a bee/ honey project. AESMAC found funding for all the equipment and training for the project to get started. The equipment included the protective gear for bee keepers to wear, the hives, and screened in area. There were 35 community members that started but some have dropped out with 18 remaining. Aurelio showed pictures of the project in action on the organizations new computer donated in February.

They are proud of how the AESMAC office is shaping up. The group meets every Sunday at 10:00am in this space. Besides the computer/laptop, they also have a scanner from Padre Luis, book shelves, table, and recently purchase 30 plastic chairs. They would like to acquire a piece of land form the community to build an office.

Alan asked about a website for access to the various publications that AESMAC is generating. Jose Luis has been asked to make a website for the group. He will add all the publications for public access at that time.

They group would still like to hire an executive director. They feel this position is essential to continuing the work of the group. Currently members have work plus volunteer jobs and can't do the job they would like to accomplish on behalf of the organization. Clark offered that Needham maybe able to fund a part of the executive directors salary if AESMAC can find funding for the other portion.

Aurelio said that members of AESMAC would also be willing to pay part of the salary. They need about 1 ½ years of funding for the executive directors salary. After that initial year and a half the director could find funding for the salary and the projects.

Clark mentioned that in the US, director jobs at NGO organizations usually understand that they are working for the good of the organization and don't expect the same high salary as if they were working in the private sector. He added that AESMAC may want to consider this type of pay structure for their executive director position.



Bee Project

The Scholarship Committee (Comité de Hermanamiento Escolar (CHE), ONG) (Alan Clayton – Matthews)

Attendees:

Francisco Quinilla Taperio - president

Ana Castro Guiterriz - member at large

Felipe Canil Lares - Treasurer

Francisco Castro Tol - member at large

Andreas Juarez - member at large

Santa Quinilla Salon – secretary (reporting for her was Romelo, her husband).

Santos Quinilla - accountant

Juvencio Chom - COCODE

Randal Shea – assists in managing the scholarship funds

This meeting went very smoothly as both sides were well-prepared. On the Santa María Tzejá side, the new accountant, Santos Quinilla, has done a wonderful job working with the treasurer, Felipe Canil, the rest of the committee, and in keeping in touch with Brenda via e-mail. On our side, we were well-prepared thanks to the careful and complete work of Brenda, who provided us with all the material and agenda items that we needed.

The treasurer gave a detailed report of the budget for 2009. In summary, the beginning balance for 2009 was Q179,499.40, including the Q166,357.70 that was received from the August 2008 delegation, and Q13,141.70 that was carried forward from the prior year, including Q9,200 that was carried over for the student Vilma Maribel. Through July 31, they had spent Q152,095.00, with Q27,404.40 remaining for the rest of the year, that includes scholarship monies that will not be disbursed in 2009 (see below for the reasons), and remaining office-related expenses that will be incurred in the remainder of the year. So their accounts are complete and transparent, exactly what we had asked for.

A few students did not receive all or part of their scholarships this year, or are expected to reimburse part or all of the scholarship money received. A brief description of each case follows:

Anna Mariela was denied her scholarship this year because the program that she wanted to take did not qualify. She decided to take a 1-year weekend program that was not approved by CHE. COCODE concurred with CHE. It was asked if she would be given another chance at a scholarship. However, the program she chose gave her a degree similar to a GED, and presumably she could go on to a university, so CHE decided she doesn't qualify a future high school scholarship. Her scholarship will be rolled over and given to another student.

In the case of Irma Ralios, her parents were having issues with the community, so the scholarship was held back, in agreement with the whole community. (Q2,000 of the scholarship was not spent.)

Frederico Maquen completed a two-year program, and so, since he did not need the third-year funds, these will be applied to a future 3-year scholarship.

Ana Pérez quit her studies to join her husband in Mexico, so she will be required to pay back the portion of her scholarship that she used, by a decision of the full membership.

Lourdes Us didn't pass 2008, so she dropped the 3-year degree and went for a 2-year program instead that will give her a general High School degree. The General Assembly decided that she will need to pay one-half of the first year's scholarship.

A question was raised about why Vilma Maribel's scholarship for 2009 was for Q9,200 while the other high school scholarships were for Q8,910. The answer was that hers was carried over from 2008, when the exchange rate was more favorable to the dollar.

One of the questions we had was why the committee used two banks instead of one. The reason was that one of the banks was where the students had an account, and so it made it easier for students to access the funds once they were awarded. The other bank was where the funds were received. The Committee's funds have now been consolidated into a single account.

Another question that we passed on from Brenda was whether or not she should c.c. anyone on her correspondence with the accountant Santos. The answer was no that Santos makes copies of the correspondence with Brenda for the rest of the Committee.

In response to Caryl's suggestion that a savings account might be good to take advantage of the large average balance of the scholarship funds, they replied that they were thinking about that too.

The government has decided to scale back the 4-year teacher program back to three years, so it turns out that we (Needham) will not have to come up with the 4th year of funding for students in that program. Given that the program is now being squeezed to three years and so is more intense than a regular 3-year program, there was a question of whether the usual 3-year scholarship amount provided enough support, an issue that we did not resolve in this meeting.

The 15 active students were doing well, turning in good grades and writing letters to their sponsors. Not all the grades were officially in yet, as is typical of early August.

We exchanged letters, and were treated with a special treat of ham and cheese sandwiches!

High School Committee (Alan Clayton-Matthews)

Attendees:

Randall Shea, Padres de Familia

Aurelio Canil, consultant for the Committee

Maria Hernandez Us, Elementary School Teacher,

Victoria Canil, Middle School teacher

Three others who were in Playa Grande were not at the meeting.

Randall thanked the delegation for the contribution, and then gave a history of the project. This is the most difficult time to get funding since they are at the beginning of the project. They will need \$50-100 thousand. The committee began in 2005. In August of that year, Jeff Taylor left some money. In May of 2006 Randall was selected to take the job of heading the study. Between May and September he interviewed experts in and outside of the community, including Clark and Padre Luis. One of the principal questions was "what do we need in this community?" The answer was that we needed new techniques in agriculture. In September of 2006 Randall shared a 25-page report of the 54 interviews with

the community. In January 2007 there was a 3-hour meeting with 50 in the community. They separated into groups of 7 to discuss the analysis, and then reported to the full meeting. Then a proposal was developed in February 2007 that included four options (most high schools in Guatemala specialize in specific career training):

1. Health
2. Environment/Natural Resources
3. Agronomy
4. Teaching

The proposal also included a vision for an ideology and final objectives of what the high school would accomplish. Louis Solano added commentary to the proposal about the need to develop social conscientiousness and analytical skills. Graduates were to be agents of change. Each recommendation was put to a vote, and then the approved document was written. Between September and November of 2007 Aurelio took a tour of technical schools in Guatemala City, interviewing 18 persons on how to design and run a high school.

In June 2008, Aurelio began to work intensively on the project. There were several challenges. He began with health, finding out where it was offered and where demand for the field existed. For some careers, there was lack of information. He investigated the legal aspects, for example, teacher credentials, finding out that the Ministry of Education does not authorize new teaching schools, since it feels that Guatemala has enough already. Therefore, the teaching program was set aside for now. He then discovered that the nursing program was a university – not a high school – career; and that the nursing assistant program was simply a course one would take after middle school, and was not a high school program.

They investigated a Technician in Rural Health program, but the Ministry of Health did not have the personnel to monitor the program. They also investigated a two-year accelerated program in medicine to prepare students for university study, but realized that it was not appropriate for the community, because it would require graduates to go to Guatemala City for a degree. Randall noted that there is a good 3-year medical field offered in Playa Grande.

Aurelio is focusing on program that would give a “Perito” in Agriculture and Forestry. A Perito is a high school degree for a program of expertise in a particular field. This degree is regulated by two different authorities. One is the ENCA, the acronym for Escuela Nacional Central de Agricultura (National Central School of Agriculture); the other is the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC). The requirements of MINEDUC are less strict than those of ENCA. ENCA requires more land and other resources. Another organization with regulatory authority is the IIDM, and acronym for the Instituto de Investigación de Desarrollo de Maya (The Institute for the Development of Mayan Peoples). This organization says that communities have to be active participants in natural resources and the environment. There is some friction between ENCA and IIDM – the former is suing the latter. (I didn't get the details of that dispute.)

In their planning for the high school, the committee is considering the important aspects of supply and demand. They do not want to duplicate a program that nearby institutions are offering – the supply, and they also want to offer a program that is needed and for which students will want to attend the new school – the demand.



Music Class (Alan Clayton-Matthews)

We – Clark and Alan – led one of the music classes in recorder playing. Almost all the students – about 20 in all – brought their own recorder, and we had a few spares for those who didn't have one in class. Our plan was to teach them a round well-known in the U.S.: Brother John. To our surprise, they already knew it. Hugo was there to help us. He is quite an accomplished recorder player himself! So we played several rounds of the song, filling the Salon with walls of echoing sound. Then Clark played “El Rey K'iche”, a classic and well-known local folk tune. We followed this by a few Renaissance and Baroque era duets that we had practiced together earlier in the summer. Hugo then seized the moment to impart a lesson about how skills like ours were achieved through practice and practice, by asking when we started playing the recorder, and how old we were now. Later in the week, as we traveled down roads and paths to meals or meetings, we often heard the mellifluous sound of recorder music emanating from houses announcing our passage.

Meeting with Health Promoters and Health Committee (Alan Clayton-Matthews)

Attendees:

Imra Pérez Ralios – President

Juana Teresa Garcia Hernandez – Pharmacy staff

Pedro Chum Tum – Health Facilitator

Aurelia Ixcoy – Committee member, not present

Pedro Chum, the Health Facilitator, was asked to serve on the Health Committee to manage the emergency cases – patients who need to be transported to Playa Grande or farther for treatment.

As usual, Pedro reported some basic statistics collected by the Health Committee. The population of Santa María Tzejá was 1,193, composed of 617 males and 576 females.

The Health Committee focuses on prevention, pre-, and post-natal care. All 110 children under 5 receive the full set of recommended vaccines. The height and weight of each young child is tracked. Once they turn two years old, they get a treatment for parasites each 6 months. They also receive regular nutritional supplements. So the health condition of children is closely monitored during their pre-school years. Once they enter primary school it becomes the responsibility of the school to identify health problems that otherwise would not come to the attention of the Health Committee.

We had a lengthy discussion of their family planning program, motivated by a conversation with one of the families we visited earlier in the week. They encourage spacing of births so as to avoid nutrition problems caused by too many mouths to feed. They also discourage pregnancies in women 40 and older, because of the associated risk at that age. And they participate in a national program related to poverty and nutrition. They offer several birth control methods, and invite couples to come to informational and training sessions. Men usually do not come. When men do not participate in these sessions, machismo-ism makes it harder for women to advocate for a method when they get home and discuss the options with their husbands. As a result, the rhythm method – which they *do* cover in these sessions – remains popular. Another problem is that when a method does not work, rumor about its ineffectiveness spreads, even though often the reason for a method not working may be because it was not applied directly, or it was applied after the woman was already pregnant. For this latter reason, the health promoters give pregnancy tests before commencing a program, but some women may begin a program without obtaining a pregnancy test. In addition, some women want to miscarry and think a birth control method will accomplish this.

Success can be measured by comparison with the neighboring community Dolores. In the case of family planning, the following table illustrates the relative success of Santa María Tzejá in promoting smaller family sizes. Note that the population of Dolores is 1,435 vs. 1,193 in Santa María Tzejá.

| Number of Children Born | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|---------|
| Year | Santa María Tzejá | Dolores |
| 2005 | 34 | 62 |
| 2006 | 17 | 58 |
| 2007 | 25 | 50 |
| 2008 | 21 | 86 |
| YTD 2009 | 13 | 25 |

Even after accounting for Dolores' larger population, the birth rate is significantly lower in Santa María Tzejá.

Dolores has a lower rate of school attendance than Santa María Tzejá, which is partially attributable to better health care for children in Santa María Tzejá. There is a national, government-sponsored incentive program to keep children in school. Fewer persons qualify for the program in Santa María Tzejá than in Dolores, 60 in Santa María Tzejá vs. 160 in Dolores. The incentive pays families Q150/month to help support children in school. The incentive rises to Q300/month if there are children both in school and at home.

One measure that prevention programs are successful is that there are fewer health consultations in Santa María Tzejá than in Dolores. Another measure of Santa María Tzejá's relative success is that, year-to-date, there were 3 positive tests in for malaria in Santa María Tzejá vs. more than 30 in Dolores.

We asked how it was going for Juana, who has been working for one year now in the pharmacy. She replied that it has been going well. She can give shots now, do minor stitching, and give ear washes. She has learned about the medications and dosages. One problem raised by us (by Paula) is the over-use of

antibiotics. Pedro agreed, saying this happens when people self-medicate. The use of antibiotics is unrestricted in Guatemala.

Some other information... The government is sponsoring three nurses. One is a professional nurse who covers three communities and is in Santa María Tzejá one day per week. Another is an auxiliary nurse who serves Santa María Tzejá on a weekend shift – Thursday through Sunday. The third is a prevention nurse who covers three communities. Finally, Antonio Panjoj, who studied medicine in Cuba, is working in Mayalán in the National Health Program.

Meeting with Computer Committee, Staff and Students (Caryl Johnson)

Attendees:

Marisela Cux Sois – member of computer committee
Aurelio Canil – president of computer committee
Rodolfo Reyes – Director of Computer Center
Abelardo Canil Boton – Computer teacher
Alfonzo Larios –
Adema ? –

We met with the computer committee, staff and several students on the porch of the computer center. The computer committee started new policies to charge for computer services and this new policy has generated some revenue. The committee would some day like to be self-sufficient. Out of the committee List of priorities they chose to purchase a projector. The current way to teach a class is by using a white board which is small and students in the rear of the room have difficulty seeing. Now with the projector classes will be taught by projecting the information on a large screen for all to see. An AESMAC engineer graduate is working to install the projector hanging from the ceiling with remote controls. A blacksmith is creating the cage for the projector to be housed.

The ministry of education came to the committee asking for an informational packet of the classes they offer and how they are taught. It was submitted as requested.

The committee has evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the center. Teachers, students, and parents were asked to participate in this survey. Based on the results of the survey the committee was able to develop a strategy to improve the computers, the center, and the classes offered. This information was the guiding tool used for outlining each course at the center. It cost 4000 quetzals to produce this document. A computer engineer from the United States reviewed the plan and made some suggestions to improve the quality even more. The long range goals are to acquire new computers. The current ones are out dated. They are thinking to replace the machines slowly over time as the funds are obtained. The committee hadn't thought about flat screens but the computer engineer said they should definitely purchase this type of screen because they use less energy and take less space. The budget is being re-drafted to include the purchase of flat screens.

The community has always had trouble with internet services. The engineer told the group to advise the community to stop using the computers to down-load movies or video. This type of down loads stresses the system and slows it down so greatly that it is inefficient. It was suggested that community members that use the computers sign an agreement not to watch or down load videos. A meeting was held to come to an agreement on these new terms and community members signed the document. It has been decided that this is a center of education and not for entertainment.

Marisela- She said she is working this year on the computer committee. She has been proud to help towards improving the center and computer access for those interested.

Rodolfo- He reported they have 229 students in 2009 with 100 women and 131 men. The schedule has changed slightly with the elementary students having classes 2 times a week. He is excited about the new projector which will speed up the teaching.

The students spoke- One young person reported that he learned Micro-soft word last year and is learning excel and power point this year.

Abelardo- The first year students are very dedicated. He finds it difficult to teach students individually and looks forward to the installation of the projector.

A student- It is so easy to get hooked on playing computer online games or watching videos on the computer. A meeting was called with students and parents about this growing concern. Everyone agreed to use the computers for educational reasons and not for games or video.

The community south of SMT Santa Maria Dolores uses the computer center. They pay a higher rate for use. They understand that SMT is organizing the center and maintaining it so it makes sense to pay more for the service. Dolores sees this center as a blessing because of the 178 local communities only three have computer centers which Santa Maria is one. The Dolores community pays the higher fees and also bus fare to reach the center but they don't mind.

The ministry of education has mandated that one year of computer education be a part of the school education. The seventh grade students need to pass computer education before they can pass into eighth grade. This forces the students to take the center and its classes seriously.

There has been some thinking about adding on to the current computer center to accommodate more computers and classes. Aurelio is writing a proposal for the computer committee to expand the center. If the expansion happens it would be generating more revenue.

Meeting with Widows (Caryl Johnson)

Attendees:

Catalina Solis Perez

Petronila Hernandez de La Cruz

Rosa Garcia Rodrigues

Cristobalina Quinilla

Junana Cux

There were a number of widows missing for the group. Several of them are suffering from illnesses and others didn't hear about the meeting time until the night before the gathering. For instance Juana Juarez had a calf that is sick so she is attending the animal. Several of the women at the meeting are complaining of various illnesses that prevent them from doing many things for themselves and their families. Catalina has cysts on her ovaries that are painful. Catalina also had eye surgery for cataracts. When she came home she had horrible headaches. The headaches are better but now her ovaries are the problems. Another woman has a fever.

The majority of the conversation revolved around the current illness that the cows have, a bovine rabies. The women told us that of the total cow population in SMT 12 have died this year from the illness. This loss is much more difficult for the widows who to begin with fewer resources. Some cows have been vaccinated but this process is costly and some hardship. Santa Maria doesn't have a veterinarian so you must pay an outsider to come to the community and in most cases travel to the farm lands on the fringes of the community where the cows graze.

The question was asked if the milk their cows. Several women responded to this question. The first said no I don't milk my cow so the calf can have the milk and grow fatter quicker. Another woman said she had cows before the violence in 1982 and then she always milked her cows some but left enough milk for the calf to drink. The other women listened and seemed to gain new knowledge from having this conversation about milking and raising calves. They all seemed happy to have the opportunity to raise cows for profit even though it is much work and worry.

Meeting with Women's Union (Caryl Johnson)

Attendees:

Cecelia Tino – vice president

Marta Castro – president

Rosa Perez Hernandez - secretary

Maria Ortiz – member-at-large

Virgilia Canil Quino - treasurer

We met the women and started the meeting with introductions. We asked how they were and how their cows were doing since we knew about the illness the cows had been facing. Within the women's union 5 cows, 2 adults and 3 calves, have died this year due to the bovine rabies. This is a hardship for the women and brings great sadness. The cow project works under the premise that a woman's cow has a calf and this calf is given to another woman to raise. This process continues until all have at least one cow. We asked what happens if a calf dies before it has been able to grow and produce a calf for another member. They discussed this since it lucky hadn't happened and decided to give the woman who lost her calf another so she could start again. They also explained that there was a general community meeting about this illness in regard to doing a second round of vaccination. There is mis-trust with the vaccination because the first round didn't always work. Some community members feel that the vaccinated cow that then died most likely already had the disease before having been vaccinated. The other community issue was that the dead animals need to be buried properly. COCODE the community organization that oversees all community activities and the mayor had a meeting to share the way to bury an animal so the disease will not spread.

The micro-lending project started in 2003 is still moving forward. If all the women who currently have loans in 2009 return their money with interest in Feb of 2010 there will be enough money for 24 women to start projects at that time. There are many women who want access to this loan opportunity. The group hopes that in 2010 then everyone will have had a first turn borrowing the money and returning the loan plus interest to the group after one year.

Virgilia said she hasn't had a loan yet but looks forward to having her chance. She would like to buy chickens about 3 or 4 dozen, 2 piglets, and to plant beans. We mentioned the piglets at the Federation of Cooperatives as a place she might consider buying pigs. She continued by saying that she knows how to raise pigs since she has one almost fully grown. Her family makes a special feed for the pig from soy and corn.

Marta took her loan money and bought a piglet that she raised. When it was big enough to sell she realized she could make twice as much money by butchering the animal herself and selling it in pieces than as a whole hog. She also purchased 3 chickens which had chicks. These chicks she raised and sold

each for 75 to 80 quetzals. With her last bit of loan money she bought corn and beans seeds to plant. She sold the crops. She was able to repay the loan, the interest and have money to keep for herself.

The question was asked about the parachute that was left for the women and their families in Feb 2004. No one in this group knew about it but their curiosity was raised to ask other members where it might be located.

Lastly we discussed the immigration book that was provided by Tina Scharback and sent to the village in August 2008. They mentioned that not many people have used it this year. We suggested putting the copy into the library for easy access by the entire community. The women thought this was a marvelous idea. Virgilia went to get the book. Ana and Paula had some additions/ updates to make to the notebook so the book was left in the guest house for the new pieces of information to be added with the understanding we would bring it to the library before weeks end.

We also noted for better communication with in the community to announce new additions like this at community meetings.

Survivors Meeting

This meeting didn't happen due to a miscommunication. The members of this committee never heard when they were scheduled to meet with us until the day after. It was decided not to try and reschedule since the delegation's schedule is so full when we are in the village. The survivors will plan to have a discussion in February with that delegation.



COCODE group picture

COCODE (Clark Taylor)

Attendance:

Juencio Chom, president
Marta Castro, Women's Union
Rolanda García, AESMAC
Irma Pérez, Health Committee

Ana María Pérez, Library Committee
Romero Pérez, Housing Committee
Hugo Quinilla, Director of the Middle School
Orlando Reyes, Land Committee
Miguel Angel Tojon Pérez, Community Mayor
Mariane Caal, Electrical Energy Committee
Juan Ortiz Solis, Improvement Committee
Randall Shea, High School Development Committee
Francisco Quinilla, Scholarship Committee
Roberto Quino, Improvement Committee
Francisco Quinilla; and Gonzalo Quinilla, Middle School Parents' Committee.

COCODE (Community Advisory Board for Development) is the government-related development committee. Its membership is made up of the chairs/presidents of all committees in the village.

Juvencio welcomed us and then offered a Power Point presentation of all the various kinds of services and programs that COCODE oversees. One section was on the decision-making processes in the village. A digital projector projected the PP slides on to a large screen. We had been told in the computer center meeting that fees paid for use of the computers had made it possible to purchase a projector. We assumed that was the projector used in this meeting.

The title slide noted that SMT was coming up on its 40th year and that the Needham church delegations had been coming for twenty-two of those years. I reflected in my diary notes the fact that our project has been accompanying the village for more than half of its life! Juvencio noted that the spot where the building we were meeting in was the approximate location of where the village had been founded. The journey since then (1970) has been a difficult one, with many curves along the way and with the help of others we have come this far.

Juvencio called attention to the categories the presentation would discuss: health, education, women's issues, religion, infrastructure, economic development, political issues. The next slide laid out the decision-making process. The highest level is the General Assembly of the community, which now meets every other Sunday and is attended by representatives of all land-holding families. Below the Assembly is the COCODE, the coordinating body, and below that are the various village committees. At times decisions made by the Assembly are carried out through other groups in the village. At other times decisions made by a committee are brought to the Assembly for final action. So the process is both up and down in its flow.

The next slide called attention to the various subprograms in the health area. They included vaccinations for humans and animals, TB tests and treatment, prenatal and newborn care, malaria and HIV/AIDS control, a breast-feeding campaign, a program to prevent blindness, family planning, a health program that includes natural medicines, midwife services, and the pharmacy. The village is thankful to Christen Dame for her family's contribution that made the pharmacy possible.

Education was the next category and was noted as a pillar of development in the community. Subcategories include the kindergarten, primary school, middle school, high school committee, computer center, library, and scholarship programs. Scholarships are managed by AESMAC and the scholarship committee. With regard to education we feel this is a privileged community, Juvencio said and it is a major priority for us. To date the village has developed education in all of its areas, except for the high

school, which is in the stage of feasibility studies. The building of a new library is underway. Sixty-two young people have done university studies.

Women's programs were the next category. An important feature of them is that women carry out their own projects, which include a cattle project that involves building pens for the animals the women own, corn mills, and a credit system. Women are involved in many other projects, but these are the ones unique to them. Juvencio noted a gender balance issue: in other communities those who bring corn to be ground are all women, but in SMT men do it, as well. Part of overcoming machismo is that men help at home. Regarding the cattle project, several village cattle have died, in spite of efforts to vaccinate them.

In this community everyone respects the views of others, and there is no obligation. The majority are Roman Catholic, but there are some evangelicals. Others are resuming and restoring Maya rituals.

Economically productive projects are of two types: the majority are cattle projects and the rest have to do with agricultural products, including grain and fruit. The majority are carried out on the land and in the woods, using natural resources. There is a high concern around the issue of deforestation, so that today there is protection of the natural resources. Our central crop is corn. We have just one road to get products in and out from Santa Marie to the municipal center.

Regarding infrastructure, we hope this year to get potable water and electrical energy. In maintaining the road we get government help. In the building of new homes we are working with the government. One hundred families have them so far. Building them involves families working together to help each other. We are working to make the village center more orderly.

The next area discussed was political issues. The community mayor, Miguel Angel reported that the government has helped with the rebuilding of the health clinic. The government offers a program called "My Family Progresses," which offers financial incentives for keeping children in school.

Randall reported on the feasibility studies related to founding a high school. He said there is also an effort to create an arm of the university in the village. The program would include a two-year liberal arts curriculum at the high school level and a three-year university-level degree in agronomy.

Paula Worby, one of our interpreters, noted that there is an overwhelming amount of development in the community. Juvencio responded by pointing out that for the 39th anniversary of the community they celebrated by having a three-day market, offering products for sale. They look to create a permanent place for a market in the community. He added that another development factor is the new ideas coming from young educated professionals in the community, which adds to the wisdom of long-standing members of the community.

I asked an open-ended question about problems in the community. Juvencio said that of course there are issues. Sometimes there are groups in conflict within the community, but we have pretty good success in dealing with them. We try to carry out programs of benefit to the entire community, but some are not happy with the result. One set of problems has to do with lack of government support for programs. As a result children go to school in very inadequate buildings. Help for health issues from the government is minimal. And this community is coming up on forty years without basic electricity and water services. Also, we are not far from the border with Mexico, which is the scene of crimes related to drugs and human smuggling. These issues tend to draw young people into them, and we are worried about our vulnerability in that, but so far we are OK.

Drugs are a potential problem. We have seen different vehicles circulating in this area. Consumption and trafficking are concerns. Communities even closer to the border are divided, with some supporting the drug traffickers out of fear or because of economic benefits. Those who don't support are threatened.

A question about how factory-farming agribusiness is impacting the area. Orlando Reyes of the Land Committee said he is a member of a committee at the regional Ixcán level. He reported that the national government is promoting African Palm for biofuel. International agricultural businesses are out to buy large expanses of land, but so far there has been successful resistance to it in the Ixcán. (Luis had told us at the beginning of the trip about the holy and unholy alliances the government took on to enable it to win the election. One of the unholy alliances is with agribusiness.) At the level of the national government many agencies support it. One deal means ten families giving up their land. Many areas in Guatemala have given into this pressure to sell their land.

Alan noted that we had visited the federation of cooperatives that the village is involved in. Are there other products that can be exported? Might the agronomy program in the high school impact that? Randall said that the high school, when underway, would draw in students in from other parts of the country and provide expertise to the area. Other produce for export might include citrus fruits, hearts of palm (not the same plant as that used for biofuel), and there can be feasibility studies for selling other crops.

There was a question about migration out of the community for economic reasons, and the impact of remittances on the community. Juvencio said that every year two or three people migrate to other parts of Guatemala, to Mexico or the U.S. Remittances from those in the U.S. are used by families receiving them to fix houses or buying food in the community. This past year remittances are down quite a bit. In SMT this has not been as noticeable as in some other communities where up to half of the men are away. Another thing remittances makes possible comes from the fact that some families save enough that they can loan money to others, so there is money in circulation.

Miguel Angel, the community mayor, asked a question of us, saying you have been coming here for twenty-two years. What is your long-term vision? Alan said we are working to bring the project to the next generation. He added that the project has been successful in Needham because of what we receive in awareness of the world. That is important to us.

I then asked if they see a downside with the project, particularly with regard to possibly unhealthy dependence on the Needham church. Rolanda answered immediately and with confidence,

We don't see it in any way as economic dependence. Your support has been an incentive for new ways of working and thinking. People don't stop working because of the support you give. On the contrary, they work even harder. Education you have helped with leads us to work harder. In that sense there is no economic dependency. Your help makes us work more intensively.

Roberto reflected with people in the group that we should not fool ourselves. We have to talk openly. There are projects in the community that wouldn't have happened without the support of the church. The computer center is an example. We would not have had another source for it, and it has had a huge impact. It has provided a stimulus for us that we would not have had otherwise.

Juvencio added that hopefully the project will last at least another generation. Our obligation in the village is to teach our next generation about the brotherhood of solidarity that has accompanied us in our

moments of crisis. He called attention to the partner family relationships with families in the church. We want to pass on to the next generation the value of this relationship, so they will appreciate it.

Francisco noted that SMT isn't universally liked by others because of the stands we have taken as a unified community for justice. In 1978 a person in another community was kidnapped by the military. We marched there and demanded his release. In 1987 people here were fully supportive of people returning from refuge in Mexico. That didn't happen elsewhere. There are people who resent the fact that we stand up for our rights. AESMAC published an ad in the newspaper asking the government not to give money to the civil patrollers, who as a group committed crimes. Even people in this village who had been patrollers resented that. People were unhappy but that was because they weren't aware of what was happening nationally.

Miguel Angel, the mayor, asked us about our assessment of how they use the money we have donated to the village. He wondered if there are ways we see in which they could use the money better. Alan responded that the decisions seem to be very well made, and respect the fact that they are made by people here in the village.

One member reported that he is on a committee for food and food products. He said the members are working to preserve native seeds, to certify them, and to gain national recognition for their local seeds. This is part of an effort to put them on a par with genetically-modified seeds that are coming from the outside. This small project has been presented to the World Food Program, which has recognized it as an example of local food products.

We left that meeting with a sense of privilege that we had been able to learn from this impressive gathering about the struggle of people in the developing world.



Church Construction and Church Board Meeting (Caryl Johnson)

Those present:

Sivano Castro:

President of construction committee

Luis Ralios:

Vice president construction committee

Marta Castro:

Treasurer construction Committee

Juan Orsorio Perez:

Board of Directors construction committee

Nicolas Noriega Morales:

Board of Directors for the church

Clark, Caryl, and interpreter

Silvano opened the meeting thanking god for this gathering and the ability to have a conversation about the church construction.

This church construction project has been a 10 year struggle of raising money and finishing pieces of the total church little by little. The current construction committee thinks the congregation has lost some energy.

In February the church construction committee had two proposals. The first was for the walk way and stairs from the front door to the road. This is estimated at costing Q10,000 or \$1220.00. The construction committee is now concerned that this estimate is under the amount that will actually be needed to complete the project. They will reevaluate this proposal. The other proposal was to have pews constructed to replace the benches for seating inside the church. The pews would be of a high grade wood and would have backs for more comfortable seating. The current benches are a rough wood and have no backs. Each pew would cost Q500 or \$61.00 and this includes materials and labor. Ideally the church would like a total of 65 pews for a total of Q32,500 or \$3963.00. The construction committee has already started to collect money from their parishioners and has collected enough to buy wood for 15 pews.

They asked us how we felt about them continuing the pews project and put the front walk/stairway on hold. We stated that they know best how to spend their money and agreed that the pew project would be a wonderful addition to the church.

Juan was thankful for our visits over the years and is concerned for the young people of the community who have many years to live. He has hope for the future generations.

Old Church building- Nicolas wanted to discuss the old church building. He welcomed us and thanked god that we can discuss things that are important to all of us. They are looking for a way to maintain the old building. The old church was the only building left standing after the February 1982 violence. This building also housed Beatriz and Clark when they first came to the village in the mid 1980's. Many of the community's initial meetings were held inside of its walls. Also the church committee realized that the wood for this building was hand cut by many community members that have since died. The group understands that it will take many resources but they would like to reconstruct the foundation which is a concrete slab and leave the rest. The plans for the building would be that half of the building would become a museum to display photos and other artifacts of the community's history. The second half would be used for a training room for the community. They are currently looking for funds to start this project. They didn't have any proposals for money amounts.

Meeting with Library (Biblioteca Euskal Herría) Committee (Caryl Johnson)

Attendees:

Carlos Quinilla – secretary

Ana Maria Perez de la Cruz – president

Isabel Osorio Ralios – treasurer

Alejandra Franco – vice president

We had noticed people in front of the Shea's were digging and the library committee confirmed that these people were doing community service to level the ground for the new library building. The project was to start in January 2009 but didn't get started until the end of July. The committee had hired an earth

mover to come level the ground for construction. This equipment never arrived so the community decided to move ahead with the project and do the digging with shovels and pick axes. The recent graduate in architecture, Nazario Guiterriez, did both the urban planning for this project and the blue prints for the building. The budget for the library is tight but the committee hopes that there will be money to complete the walls and roof. The stucco finish and furniture can wait if needed. The space will be a rectangle about 39 by 45 feet with an area for the books and an area for study. The thought with in the community would be to use the current library site as the future space for the middle school.

The committee wasn't sure exactly the number of students using the library in a day. They estimate about 39 a day. This is the first year middle school students can check out books from the library. It has gone well with no lost books to date. We asked if there is a set loan period. They said one hasn't been established but will think about how to start such a policy. The library catalog is hand written in notebooks. Some day the committee would like to computerize the system.

The current librarian is Candelaria Osorio, Juan's daughter. She worked in a Playe Grande library for 9 months and then left to finish high school. The committee was happy to hire her since she had experience working in a library.

Interviews with Bartolo Reyes and Juana Pérez

One of the charges of the August delegation was to bring back statements from Santa María Tzejá about the meaning of the partnership to Santa María Tzejá. We interviewed two prominent members of the community, Bartolo Reyes, and Juana Pérez. Here are their reflections on what the partnership has meant to Santa María Tzejá.

Bartolo Reyes:

For Santa María Tzejá, the relationship with the Needham church has been a success in a number of ways, including socially and in its economic support. It has been a great success in terms of supporting education, health, and other community projects. We are continually grateful in our prayers. Needham has extended its help without self-interest and has supported Santa María Tzejá with its many needs since the time of the armed conflict. Delegations have visited us for so many years. Now among our young people, there is no more illiteracy, and some have even become professionals. That is the greatest gift.

Juana Pérez (Interviewed by Paula Worby)

Paula Worby: "... tell us a little about the impact or your impression of the relationship between the (Congregational) Church of Needham and the community of Santa María Tzejá."

Juana Maurilia Pérez:

"Well, I would say that, yes, it has had a lot of impact. There is a lot of difference between this community and others that don't receive support of any sort, like we do.

In particular, right now I am doing my practicum (teaching) in San José la Veinte. I did this because I wanted to do something different. Knowing how things are in our Básico Institute (middle school), I wanted to see what it was like in other villages. And the truth is that I was surprised when I first got there,

seeing the difference between here and San José la Veinte. There they have no support from a single other person, only the fees from students. So comparing it with here, it is quite different in terms of education.

But in the community (of Santa María Tzejá) there are many other differences, due to the relationship between the Needham church and here. If we talk about the level of organization, people here are also very organized. There are different groups. There are different committees. This makes the community different. We who live here have a different perspective from people in other communities. This is very interesting to me, since it impressed me so much when I arrived in San José la Veinte. There, for example, they have no computers in the school. I thought about how here we have offices for teachers, a director, and a secretary, as well as a computer center and teacher workroom – lots of differences. But then reflecting on it, I realized that San Jose la Veinte is just like the great majority of rural communities. So, with all the communities that exist, I don't know if there is another one like ours here. Here the youth have at hand all that they need.

This is the difference, and it all began when people returned from refuge (in Mexico), with the (Needham) church supporting the teachers from the very beginning. Because it was then that education was given priority, and this has changed things a lot. Now that I am there (San José la Veinte), I can better distinguish the conveniences we have here, the facilities we have to accomplish our work. This is impressive, but as I say, it is due to the relationship we have (with the Needham church). For example, take the computer center it is because of Clark, through his son, that we have this. And many other benefits, such as the economic support to different committees, since many of them function through the economic support that is received here from the delegation. So this is quite a strong impact that I am noting.”

Visits with Families and Meals (Caryl Johnson)

Mariano Boton and Julia Simaj Tino (Hadden)

Saturday dinner was enjoyed with this family. They are the parents on Santiago who lives, works, and studies in the city. Their daughter Marcelina is in SMT. Another daughter Paula works and lives in Cantabal. She has her youngest with her and he goes to school. She is married to Rogelio Hernandez who is in the city studying. Rufino another son is in Guatemala City.

Ramon Cux and Ana Castro (Oberle)

This is a lively family that recently bought and moved to a land lot high up a hill over looking the village. You can reach this home by going straight up from the Dolores road just before the steep hill or walk up the steep hill and turn a hard left and walk on a path until you reach the house. They have a motorcycle but it doesn't work. When they get enough money it will be repaired and used again. There are 5 children:

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Noelia | Sept 1996 1 st year middle school |
| Alma Gabriela | 1999 4 th grade |
| Waleska | born 2002 |
| Ramon | born 2006 |
| Florecita | born 2007 |

Hugo Reyes and Lucia Us (McDonald/ Abair)

They have two sons Jonathan and Victor Hugo. Clark asked their opinion about the Honduras situation. Hugo answered first put left space for his wife to say how she felt.

Valentin Quinilla and Magdalena Us

(Dame)

Their oldest son Hugo, his wife Adelina and their two children joined us for dinner. Hugo's oldest boy, Valentin's grandson is his first grandchild. This boy is 6 years old and counts in three languages. He is in his grandmother's, Magdalena, first grade classroom. Valentin and Magdalena have a daughter born 2001, Shaden Ixcheme.

Pedro Hernandez and Zoilia Larios

(Horton)

They have 6 children. Three of the kids were home and three were at the middle school. Magdalena is in her last year at the elementary school.

Estanislao Canil and Berta Ralios

(Scharback)

They have a new house that is just about complete. The children have moved in and are sleeping there. I took a picture of the finished property to show to Tina.

Francisco Javier Canil Morales and Rosa Perez Hernandez (no partner family)

Rosa is the sister of Romando Prez Hernandez and daughter of Domingo Perez Ralios (Rees). This couple has two children 12 and 10. Fransico spent 5 years in Mexico. He showed us his Mexican papers. Rose went for 2 months but missed her children so much she came back. They both plan to go back to Mexico in November and leave their two kids with grandparents. Fransico works at the chick farm for 900 pesos/week working 10 hour days 6.5 days per week. This works out to about Q75 a day. Rosa will work in someone's home for 100 pesos /day and this includes room and board.

Candelario Quinilla and Fermina Taperio

(Taylor)

Candelario and Fermina were not at home because they were visiting their son, Santos and daughter –in-law. She delivered a baby boy 10 days before our visit. Chirstobalina made us lunch, another daughter, who is expecting her 5th child. Once again her partner left her when she became pregnant. She has two in elementary school, one in first year middle school and the youngest is 3 ½ years old. It started to rain and we sat on the porch for a while.

Santiago Tiu Lopez and Virgilia Canil Quino

(Lane)

Their oldest is in her last year at the middle school. Her grades haven't been good enough for a CHE scholarship. They also don't have the money to pay for her to continue school. We asked who write the partner family letters. They replied that their oldest does the writing. Santiago finished 3 grade and his wife finished 6th.

Manuel Ralios Juarez and Micaela Ralios Alonzo

(Suydam)

Their daughter Vilma is married and lives in Dolores. Manuel works the parcela, farm land. He grows corn the 5 month variety. This type of corn is from the ancient people and you can grow two crops a year. It is highly resistant to disease.

Dionicio Chuc Cu and Teresa Gonzales

(Sanborn)

This is their first letter cycle and they were excited to write back to their family in Needham. Dionicio noted that the Sanborn's had sent an email address. He was concerned they wouldn't speak Spanish or be able to translate his response. I told Dionicio to try the email and also send a hard copy. Teresa is the daughter of Meg Albert's partner family. Dionicio is from another village, Santa Elena, and he met Teresa in the SMT middle school in 1997. They finally got together in 2007. After middle school he went to

high school and she went to Mexico to work for several years. His brother is Santiago Chuc who was part of the University students and those from SMT. Dionicio is the sub-director of the middle school. And also teaches.

Diego Ortiz and Dominga Castro

(Clayton-Matthews)

Diego and Dominga are the partner family of Alan and Jane Clayton-Matthews and their grandson who lives with them, Mariano Cifuentes, corresponds with Jessica Clayton-Matthews. Diego is 86 and Dominga 84. Recently he went to Playa Grande for a hernia problem. The doctor told him it was inoperable, and that he should rest. Diego's son-in-law, Luis Ralios, helps on the parcela, as does his grandson Mariano. Diego talked about his experiences during the violence, fleeing to Esquintla, where he was detained by the military for eight days. His son Pedro died in the violence by being shot while fleeing. Another son, Ricardo, served in the army, but refused to serve in the civilian patrol.

Diego and Dominga's grandson, Mariano, is in 9th grade in the Middle School, where he was held back. He writes songs and plays the guitar, and wants to go to a music high school in Guatemala City. That would allow him to pursue a career in either performance or teaching. Given his performance in school, however, he is unlikely to qualify for a scholarship, and doesn't know how he will be able to pay for his education. His grandparents are too poor, and his father left when he was small. His mother remarried and lives with his stepfather in Playa Grande.

During the week, I saw Dominga on the roads several times, and after the Despedida, Angelina, an aunt of Mariano, saw me and sent her regards to Jessica.

The Despedida (Farewell Party)

The despedida or farwell party was held this year in the salon number 2 next door to the guest house. The community looks forward to this celebration. It is wonderful time to celebrate this 22 year partnership, lifting up the children who perform for the community and finish the business of the delegation which is signing the ACTA (the document written by the two communities about the monies and supplies provided). This year the elementary school had prepared a variety of songs, dances, and fun for all of us to enjoy. The delegation also takes the stage for a song or two and this year was no different. When in the school Clark had the kindergarten class singing the song we had chosen. He asked the kindergarteners to join us on stage to sing with us. The three of us from Needham with the help of the interpreters and their families and the kindergarteners belted out a tune in Spanish. Clark and Alan also played a piece on their recorders. After the festivities there is a bit of packing to do and then to bed because the van will arrive early to take us back to Guatemala city.

Return to Guatemala City and Home

Edgar Sr. came to pick us up in one of the company's vans for the trip south. We were waiting by the guest house when he arrived and immediately loaded the luggage and headed out. Several members of the improvement committee were there to see us on our way. We thanked them for their hard work and dedication to the community and the partnership.

It is an early morning and most of the delegation is tired so it is peaceful and quiet in the van for the first several hours. We drive past the marvelous landscape as we head east then south out of the low lands and rainforest towards Coban. It has become a tradition to stop for breakfast just west of Coban downtown area. We sat outdoors on the veranda and enjoyed the backyard view of gardens and a small playground. Some of us ordered lunch items and others had breakfast. The rest of the trip was uneventful with conversations between the delegation members.

We learned from Edgar that he was a road worker back in the 1980's. He was part of the construction crews that built the road between Coban, Playe Grande, and Jose de la Veinte, the community just north of Santa Maria. He went on to say that he never thought that the road he helped build would become the means of his livelihood in later years.

We arrive in Guatemala City and dropped Paula and her family along with Ana and Marcelo at Paula and Luis's home. We were then dropped off at the hotel. We had made plans to have dinner Friday night with Natividad Lux, a woman from Santa Maria who was graduating from the University that week with a degree in law. She met us at the Hotel Spring and we walked to 6th avenue to have dinner. She shared with us her plans for after graduation and how she felt about AESMAC work in the community. After sending her on her way and returning to the hotel we settled into the room for the next two nights. Clark and I were sitting outside our room writing in our journals when I heard footsteps near by and someone talking to Clark who had fallen asleep. It was Scott and Joene Pike who were staying in the hotel for the night before heading to Playe Grande to set up their week of work with optometry students. We chatted briefly and decided to gather for breakfast Saturday morning when we might be more alert. At breakfast we found out the Joene's luggage hadn't been on their plane and they would be spending another night in the city while waiting for the luggage to arrive. This inspired us to meet for dinner Saturday night after we had completed our daily activities. We had decided not to spend Saturday in Antigua. Instead we spent the day in the city shopping and interviewing Paula's friend Dorotea Gomez.

Trip Evaluation

City

- Positives-
- Paula and Ana translating
 - Seeing Channel and Ruby
 - Having lunch with Amanda
 - Being in the presence of a courageous person named Mario
 - Luis is amazing. He gave a well organized de-briefing of the current situation in Guatemala.
 - Like the coyuntura on Thursday morning
 - Unstructured conversation with AESMAC worked great
- Negatives-
- Via Campesina not interesting
 - We didn't have dinner at the hotel on Thursday
- Suggestions-
- Have the coyuntura on Thursday morning
 - Spend Wednesday afternoon walking to the central plaza to see sights, look for names of people who died during conflict on columns.

Coban

- Positives-
- Hotel Monja Blanca a central location with a yummy breakfast
 - Bus saves money
 - Co-op van worked well for our sized group

- D'Acuna restaurant is a treat
- Play cards and having fun with Sonya, Marcelo and Ana
- Negatives- We didn't connect with the students
- Suggestions- Start time to connect with students 6pm or later
- Start planning and communicating with SMT earlier
- Reiterate plan to people in SMT. Confirm

Village

- Positives- Having two wonderful interpreters
- Negatives- Some meetings didn't happen because the members weren't told when the meeting was scheduled
- Suggestions- On Sunday since church doesn't end until 10:30 start meetings later, after lunch
- Set meetings in 2 hour blocks
- Use the COCODE power point in training sessions
- Leave 2 hours for ACTA prep
- Complete the exercise to see if the # of meetings fits the time in 2 hour blocks
- Parcela trip may be the Natural reserve in SMT
- Parcela trip to La Chua Nature Preserve

Conversation with Dorotea Gomez (Clark Taylor)

Dorotéa Gómez' life was revealing in her experience with the racism and sexism that indigenous women face daily, and inspiring in the courage she exhibited in dealing with these very ugly traits in Guatemalan society. She told her story when we were gathered at Paula's house on the final day before our return to Needham. We were privileged to hear her very personal history.

She began by saying that she hailed from the Santa Cruz del Quiché area. As a small child she was born and lived outside that larger town in an indigenous village called "Xesic 1." The word "Xesic" means, when translated from her native K'iche' language, "under the tobacco." The name comes from the fact that a plant in the village looks like tobacco. Four villages were formed in the immediate area which were called Xesic 1, Xesic 2, etc. through 4.

I came from a large family of 10 children, with three girls and seven boys. I was in the middle of the sibling order. Two of my older siblings were girls. The oldest of them had developmental limitations, but I was very close to the sister who was a couple of years older.

My parents' intention was to send all of us to school to finish the third grade—the level of schooling available at that time in the village—without preference for the boys. That was a joint decision of my parents. My mother had completed the 3rd grade, while my father had no schooling at all. The hope of both of them was that all of their children would learn to read and write.

In July of 1981, civil war violence was approaching our area. Some families decided to leave. In our family the younger ones moved to Santa Cruz del Quiché, while the older ones stayed in our village. The unrest and threat of violence calmed down and we all went back to our village. But as the violence picked up again we all moved to the town.

From the first moment we lived in Santa Cruz del Quiché we experienced the reality of racism against us for simply being indigenous. We were seen as outsiders and asked, “Why did you move here?” We didn’t speak Spanish well. That was our first experience of feeling marginalized and oppressed.

Our first month in SCdelQ was tumultuous. There were massacres that affected our village and family. Our family lost uncles, aunts and other family members. There were family members who were kidnapped and disappeared. We had to mourn the dead at a time when we had no money, no land, no means for anything. It left us in a bad emotional and spiritual state. In the early months my father felt the burden of how to reestablish the family. The question of schooling came up. Some of my cousins who were in schools in the capital went back and forth from home to the capital. They told my family, “Your kids are going to need more education to avoid further marginalization.

The strategy of my family was that all would work for pay to support each other. My father and my brothers were hired by others to work in their corn fields. Then as my older brothers finished primary school they went to the city to work, so the younger ones could continue in school.

This was a difficult time. In the aftermath of the violence my parents told us not to talk about what had happened. We couldn’t say anything about the violence in school, but just had to keep all the hurt to ourselves. In school there was harsh discrimination, particularly against girls. In a class of forty, the teacher assumed we didn’t have the ability to do the work. They piled on extra work. The goal of my parents by that time was to get all of their children through primary school.

When my next older sister finished primary school, she wanted to continue. Mother said sixth grade was enough, but my father told her she could stay in school, but she had to continue doing the female work of cooking, cleaning, etc. Seeing that development, I knew I wanted to continue. My father said OK, but only if your sister achieves good grades or if either of you fails a year, you will both have to leave school.

We accepted those conditions and father set another. We were prohibited from making friends with boys. My father implied that you can study or you can get married—one or the other, but not both. We agreed and both of us finished middle school, and were allowed to go on to high school. That became possible because my father found a way to get a loan and to open a business with two of his sons in another town, so it became economically feasible for us to stay in school.

In the next phase there was pressure on us to get good grades, but also to continue doing our feminine roles. During vacations one or the other of us went to serve our father and brothers as traditional daughters in the family. We became aware in new ways of the racism in this new (for us) town of Zacapa, where my father and brothers were working. People there had a *Ladino* (non-indigenous) identity, which was aggressive and violent. It made things very difficult for the indigenous.

While we were in high school there were other conditions and expectations set for us. We were to prepare for traditional women’s roles—to become a teacher or secretary, so that as soon as we finished we could go right to work to provide for our younger siblings. We could have argued against those conditions, but that would have given father an excuse to say that we would have to drop out.

As my sister prepared to go to high school she had her eye on a girls’ school in the capital that was to train teachers with an emphasis on home economics, flowers, etc., but also focused on community organizing. The high school in SCdelQ was of lower quality. My father gave in and told her that if she passed the

entrance in the city school, she could enroll there. At that time it was not common for girls to go alone and live in the city. She passed the entrance exams and enrolled in the school.

Once my sister had gone that route, I knew when I was ready I wanted to go there also. By now it wasn't so much that teaching was my career goal, but that I could see that my options were limited. Going to school in the city gave me the opportunity to get away from my parents and the limitations of the female role. It seemed unfair that we were always required to serve the men and not the other way around.

My sister finished the program in 1990 and got a paid internship where she worked for a German NGO. So my father saw that she could make money and decided that I could go to the capital, as well. So I arrived in Guatemala City at the age of 15 and had to make my way. My father sent money, but not enough, so I had to work. I faced blatant and traumatic forms of discrimination in all parts of my life, including school. I was tempted to give up and leave, but I pushed that temptation off. I didn't want to go home.

In my grade in school there were 120 girls, but just 3 of us were indigenous. I was the only one of the three that opposed wearing the school uniform, given my desire to keep on wearing my indigenous dress. I said I have the right in the constitution to wear my traditional clothing. There was a psychologist at the school and I was sent there. I said I wouldn't give in. They sent me other times to the psychologist, and when they asked me if I went, I assured them that I did, but I skipped out and didn't go. So I never wore the uniform.

In school I felt a lot of pressure, fearing that I would fail. There was no one to help me. I became aware that my preparation was deficient compared to the other girls who had gone to school in the capital. I would cry and fall asleep in classes. A teacher humiliated me in front of the class by asking, what do you eat? You must be malnourished to do so poorly. No one understood my situation.

Then one teacher took notice of me. She invited me to speak with her in the recess and in her office. Bit by bit she took me under her wing and did things like loan me books. At that point I just hoped to get by with passing grades in my courses because during the first part of the year I was failing my classes. With her help I managed to get all 60's that first year (barely the passing mark) in my classes. Nevertheless, I told my parents I was doing well and I was able to finish the four years and graduate.

As I finished high school my father insisted that was enough. But I knew my way around by that point. I could pick and choose. My father told me he expected me to come home every weekend, but I decided I wanted to continue. I told him I had a job. I did have a scholarship to the university, so I was no longer dependent on him.

In my thinking at the time my first choice was to study to be a doctor, but medical school was a full time, all-day program, which wouldn't have allowed me to be employed, so I couldn't do it. My second choice was to study anthropology, but my job required me to be all over the country, so that wouldn't work. My only time to study was on Saturday, and the only program available was at the Landivar University in social work. I got a scholarship that covered all of my tuition and half of my fees. It was my only choice.

My first year working in an NGO was difficult. All those running the agency were men and they made eight times more than those of us who were doing the work in the field. In that workplace I was exposed to continuing racism and machismo and it wasn't fair. The other women were shier, so didn't speak out. This happened in an agency where the men hired us (Mayan women) to give the image of working with local people so the men running it could get foreign money. They bragged that they were doing culturally

appropriate and empowering work with indigenous people, but the internal practices of the organization were in direct contradiction with their rhetoric. I worked there two years and left.

Then I worked for an NGO that served women refugees on a project researching the process undergone by women refugees who had returned to Guatemala. I saw from the women we interviewed how some other women had had a similar experience as I had had. That was the first time I did research. I worked with what I considered revolutionary ideas among very progressive people. I met Paula there. This agency had a different kind of structure than my first NGO. In working in research there I was seeing new books and exposed to the concept of theory. I developed new goals in that period and finished my social work degree. Up to this point I had worked at the assistant level. Now I wanted to get more schooling and move into supervisory roles, but now I wanted to get out of Guatemala for the degree.

I gave myself time to find a study and scholarship program that I wanted that would take me. It took four years. Some programs required a mastery of English which I didn't have. Others indicated that anyone over 25 was too old. Then I found an option that said I could go anywhere as long as I spoke the language. On my second try I was accepted, but the administrator suggested I study in Mexico as that is where Mayan women tended to go to study ethnic and gender issues. I said no, that I wanted something entirely new. So I ended up learning Portuguese and went to Brazil to study for three years.

In that three years I learned a lot. It was restful in that there were no reminders of discrimination or oppression. I was very conscious that I had a role as a foreigner in a country that welcomed foreigners. But I was aware that Brazil had its own racism, against the Afro-Brazilians. but for me it was a time of emotional tranquility.

One aspect of my scholarship was the condition that I would return to Guatemala to give back what I had learned. But having finished a master's degree, the department in the Brazilian university where I was studying urged me to do a doctorate. But I gave into internal pressure and came back.

After three years in Brazil it was sad and traumatic to return to a society that was racist, violent and conservative. Given how the economic situation and criminality in Guatemala had worsened in the three years of my absence, my brother told me that if you are ever harassed, don't speak up because your attackers could kill you. (He knew how I would tend to be outspoken) But one day I was in the market and a man grabbed my breast. I was startled and furious. I grabbed his shirt and said, "You respect me. Things have changed." He was shocked and let me go, but I was afraid that he would come after me and even though there were onlookers, that none would come to my aid. At that point I was back for two months and didn't have a job.

It took me a long time to get a job offer. The job was to work at an exhibit where the content was about racism and inter-ethnic relations. It wasn't ideal because its tasks were not up to my level of professional expertise. But at the same time it had a positive purpose, to measure the impact of the program on people who came to see it. The job had a two-year commitment attached to it, but when the financial crisis hit there were cutbacks. My whole unit and my job were cut.

Those of us who studied abroad had been assured that we would get appropriate jobs right after graduation. But the jobs were not available. I had a friend who received a scholarship to study in Japan, which she did (learning Japanese in the process) and the agency that sponsored her got her a job matching her skills in the Guatemalan Ministry of Education when she returned.

My parents are alive and well, but they don't understand why I don't have a job now. They say, "All that education and no job!" For the education that doesn't evidence financial success is not worth it. When I had a job I helped my younger siblings. Now our family is quite highly educated. Of the ten of us, eight are professionals, five with university degrees, two have master's degrees, and one is finishing a doctorate in Spain. I have a degree in social anthropology.

I'm not sure about my plans for the future. I'm giving myself a period of reflection. Here there are many limitations to my living my life as I would please. I might want to get a doctorate outside of Guatemala.

After she finished her description of her life, I (Clark) urged her to get in touch with, and work with the students from SMT, our partner village. She had been with us the night we met with the AESMAC students in Guatemala City. She wants to interview them, especially the girls, for an article she is writing.

ACTA

Between the Community of Santa María Tzejá, Ixcán, Quiché, Guatemala and The Congregational Church of Needham, Massachusetts, U.S.A. August 2009

On August 6, 2009 in the community of Santa María Tzejá, Ixcán, Quiché, Guatemala, the members of the Congregational Church of Needham, Massachusetts who are present in the community dedicate ourselves to continue in our relationship of friendship and solidarity with Santa María Tzejá.

The friendship began with a public act in August of 1987 and will continue today with the signing of this ACTA. The purposes of this friendship include the following: mutual understanding, solidarity, peace, mutual support, cultural exchange, the exchange of letters by families, and projects determined by, and in benefit of, the community of Santa María Tzejá.

Representatives of the Needham church have met with: the Improvement Committee, the teachers in the Primary and Básico (Junior High) schools, the Committee for the High School, the Library Committee (Biblioteca Euskal Herria), the Computer Center Committee, the Scholarship Committee, the health promoters and Health Committee, members of the student and professionals' association AESMAC Kemb'al No'j (both in Santa María Tzejá and in Guatemala City), the Women's Union, the Widows' Committee, the Church Committee, and representatives of COCODE (the Community Development Council).

The representatives of the Needham church respect the democratic decision-making process and therefore have understood that the Improvement Committee in its work represents the entire community. Consequently, decisions regarding the use of funds for general projects of the community are in the hands of the Improvement Committee.

The Needham church representatives and the Improvement Committee have reached agreement on the following points:

The Church brings funds to benefit general projects of the community.

The Needham church sent funds for the community by wire transfer to the bank account of the Improvement Committee. The wire transfer of six thousand five hundred dollars (\$6,500.00) which equals fifty-two thousand six hundred ninety-eight and eighty one-hundredths 'quetzales' (Q52,698.80). This amount is to be divided in the following manner:

- a. The amount of five thousand five hundred dollars (\$5,500.00), equal to forty-four thousand five hundred ninety-one and twenty-nine one hundredths ‘quetzales’ (Q44,591.29) for general projects of the community, as designated by the Improvement Committee;
- b. The amount of one thousand dollars (\$1000.00), equal to eight thousand one hundred seven and fifty-one one-hundredths ‘quetzales’ (Q8,107.51), to the High School Project Committee.

The Needham church sent funds for scholarships and related expenses by wire transfer to the bank account of the Scholarship Committee (CHE). The wire transfer equaled twenty-four thousand one hundred ninety-two dollars (\$24,192.00)

A matrix annexed to this document indicates the balances, the money spent, the quantity received, and the total available for the various community projects.

FUNDS FOR EDUCATION: To benefit education in Santa María Tzejá, the Church sent the previously mentioned twenty-four thousand one hundred ninety-two dollars (\$24,192.00), whose equivalency in ‘quetzales’ was not known when this Acta was prepared. These funds of the Scholarship Committee will be used as follows:

- a. High school scholarships: the ‘quetzal’ equivalent of twenty thousand four hundred dollars (\$20,400.00).
- b. Supplement for a university scholarship: the ‘quetzal’ equivalent of two thousand seven hundred dollars (\$2,700.00).
- c. Payment of accounting services: three thousand six hundred ‘quetzales’ (Q3,600.00).
- d. For travel expenses: one thousand one hundred sixty-five ‘quetzales’ (Q1,165.00).
- e. For administrative and office expenses: seven hundred ‘quetzales’ (Q700.00).
- f. For publicity and marketing: two hundred ‘quetzales’ (Q200.00).
- g. For legal services: six hundred fifty ‘quetzales’ (Q650.00).
- h. To fund pending expenses from 2009 (for accounting services, travel, and administrative expenses): one thousand eight hundred seventy ‘quetzales’ (Q1,870.00).
- i. Additional funds that result from a favorable exchange rate may be used for any item agreed upon by the Scholarship Committee.

6. FUNDS FOR COMMUNITY PROJECTS: For general community projects, the Needham church donated the amount of five thousand five hundred dollars (\$5,500.00), equal to forty-four thousand five hundred ninety-one and twenty-nine one-hundredths ‘quetzales’ (Q44,591.29). The Improvement Committee has designated that these funds shall be utilized in the following manner:

- a. Q800 to the Primary School for travel expenses.
- b. Q800 to the Primary School Parents' Committee for travel expenses.
- c. Q1,800 to the Primary School for equipment maintenance and gas for the generator.
- d. Q3,000 to the Primary School teachers for student materials.
- e. Q2,000 to the Primary School for teaching materials.
- f. Q2,500 to the Básico for office expenses, computer maintenance, etc.
- g. Q2,391.29 to the Básico for fuel.
- h. Q2,500 to the Básico for teaching materials.
- i. Q600 to the Básico for graduation activities.
- j. Q4,900 to the Library Euskal Herria for salary support.
- k. Q300 to the Health Committee for travel expenses.
- l. Q2,400 to the Health Committee for health promoter support.
- m. Q10,000 to the Health Committee for salary support for the Community Health Facilitator.
- n. Q1,000 to the Health Committee for the emergency fund.
- o. Q4,000 to the Construction Committee of the Catholic Church for front steps.

- p. Q800 to the Improvement Committee for travel expenses.
- q. Q1,000 to the Improvement Committee for office expenses and fuel.
- r. Q1,000 to the Mayor's office for travel expenses.
- s. Q1,000 to the Community Development Council (COCODE) for travel expenses.
- t. Q800 to the Women's Union for travel expenses.
- u. Q1,000 to the Potable Water Committee for travel expenses.

The Needham church has brought supplies for the Primary School and the Básico, donated by the church school children, medicines and supplies for the health post, a variety of books for the library, and sports items that were delivered to the Improvement Committee.

Once more, we want to express our profound thanks to the community of Santa María Tzejá for the hospitality and friendship that you have offered us during these days. We want to assure you that you will continue to be present in our thoughts and prayers. We ask the God of love to accompany you in all your efforts to improve the wellbeing of this community, and thus contribute to the construction of the Kingdom of God.

Signed this day, August 9, 2009, in Santa María Tzejá, Ixcán, Quiché, Guatemala.
(Followed by signatures of the Improvement Committee and delegation members)